

GMA to appoint Mike Defensor as PNR chairman?

President Arroyo is set to appoint Michael Defensor as chairman of the Philippine National Railways (PNR) to revive the country's aging rail system, official sources said.

Defensor is largely credited for the successful opening of the mothballed Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (NAIA-3) last July after six years of legal wrangling.

Administration officials said Mrs. Arroyo asked Defensor last August to head the PNR after he finally opened the NAIA-3 to local and international flights in less than a month as head of a task force

to make the facility operational. The task force is now disbanded.

The Palace announcement of Defensor's appointment could come anytime this week, officials said.

When contacted by The STAR, the former environment secretary and housing head said he was not aware of any new appointment coming from Mrs. Arroyo but admitted that they had briefly talked about problems besetting the PNR several weeks ago.

Defensor is the fifth losing administration senatorial can-

didate in the 2007 elections to be given a government post by the President.

The others are former senator Ralph Recto as head of the National Economic and Development Authority; Vicente Sotto III as chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board; former Ilocos Sur governor Luis "Chavit" Singson as deputy national security adviser; and former Surigao del Sur congressman Prospero Pichay as member of the board of the Local Water Utilities Administration.

- Paolo Romero